2: Boissevain E-5 (1960-1961) 1965
EZ6 Malta EZ6

CHAPTER II

The National Organizations: State, Church and Political Party

Generally speaking, the activities of government are carried out by a number of departments and boards, each of which is under the control of a director or chairman. Each of these, in turn, is usually responsible to an elected Cabinet Minister. But under the interim constitutional arrangements which followed the resignation from office of the Labour Party in 1958, Department Heads were responsible to a British Chief Secretary and his assistants. Under each Department Head are ranked the various grades of civil servants. These run from the Executive and Clerical Officers through non-pensionable clerk-typists, fatiguemen and industrial labourers. Altogether, some 17,000 persons work for the government. They represent 19 per cent of the total labour force. This makes the Malta Government the largest employer on the islands. Entrance to all but the lowest grades, and promotion between the principal grades within the civil service, are by means of open competitive examinations.

Malta's small size has facilitated the centralized administration required of an island fortress. As already observed, there are no councillors, headmen or mayors, either elected or hereditary, to represent the interests of the villagers to the government or convey the wishes and commands of government to the people. Virtually all the machinery and personnel of government are located in Valletta. Only the police represent government authority in all villages. There are government elementary schools for boys and girls in all villages and almost all hamlets. Now most villages also have a dispensary which is open for a few hours a day under the supervision of a government District Medical Officer and a nurse. There are a few regional post offices and branches of the Department of Emigration, Welfare and Labour. All other public services, such as street sanitation, sewerage (where it exists), water, electricity, repair of roads and so on, which in

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EZ6 Malta EZ6

even try to remove him from office. But they do not attack the office itself. In contrast, a revolution aims at changing not only the office-holder, but also the nature of the office and the social order in which it functions. Though the Malta Labour Party has strongly criticized the Archbishop and the clergy, often in insulting language, for their refusal to endorse its integration scheme, and, later, its demands for independence, it has never suggested that the office of archbishop should be abolished or the Church suppressed. The Church, however, attacks Mintoff as though he were bent on overthrowing the established social order in general, and the Catholic Church in particular. The extremely severe sanctions that it has directed against the MLP and its leaders reflect this point of view.

There is a very real danger that this strong medicine may kill the patient, for there is evidence that the MLP's anti-clericalism is in fact becoming anti-Catholicism, and the rebellion a revolt against the Church. Some of the more extreme, educated Labour supporters are showing a growing interest in the ideologies of countries which have fought successful battles against the Church. Though the great majority of the Labour supporters would still like to be devout Catholics, a small but increasing number are beginning to question the social order. As one remarked to me, 'I'm regarded as a Communist by my neighbours and the Church, which denies me its sacraments. Have I anything to lose by becoming one?' Though Communist literature rarely finds its way into Malta, since it is illegal to send it in the mails, a number of persons have begun to listen regularly to Radio Moscow. A few are even discussing the possibility of joining another church.

IV

But in spite of this bitter conflict, Maltese villages are still tightly united communities, life goes on and the social order does not disintegrate. Considering everything, there has been relatively little open violence between the supporters of the Church and the Labour Party. If occasionally there was some, it was most often caused by or directed against outsiders, either those who married into the villages, or who were imported for some special occasion from other villages. The battle between the Gozitans and the Maltese Labour supporters was an extreme case of this kind. But